

Report

Report to:	Hamilton Area Committee
Date of Meeting:	20 September 2023
Report by:	Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

Subject:	Update on Town Centres
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ update members on the activity currently being undertaken across the Hamilton area

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that members note the current activity across the Hamilton area.

3. Background

- 3.1. The nature of town centres across the UK is in a transitional stage. The range of issues involved in the challenges town centres are facing are broad and complex. Factors such as the economic downturn, internet shopping, the growth of out-of-town shopping malls, changes in retailers' business models and consumer expectations have resulted in a decline in footfall.
- 3.2. Some of the issues are local and specific to individual towns, however, many are issues seen across the country influenced by wider economic patterns, consumer behaviour and corporate decisions. Supporting town centres remains a Council priority and officers continue to work in partnership with groups and organisations in each town to achieve our common goals.
- 3.3. The role town centres have in our communities is significant and, therefore, cannot be overstated. Town centres support and contribute to the lives of people across our communities whether this is to access essential services, visiting for shopping or enjoying leisure time.
- 3.4. Around 70% of businesses and jobs in the economy are located in town centres and they are the principal location for leisure and hospitality. They retain a vital social importance as a meeting, events and performance space.
- 3.5. Across the 10 towns defined in the South Lanarkshire Local Development Plan (LDP) there is active and ongoing engagement with the most appropriate groups in the town. These range from town to town and include Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), Development Trusts, Community Councils and private property owners.

- 3.6. Town Centre strategies and action plans have been prepared and approved for Hamilton, Cambuslang, Larkhall and Blantyre with work now underway in Rutherglen. Similar plans are being progressed by the communities in Lanark and Carluke along with the master planning work by the owners of East Kilbride.
- 3.7. These strategies and action plans are closely aligned with the Government approach to town centres captured in the New Future for Scotland's Town Centres report and action plan.
- 3.8. Officers in Enterprise and Sustainable Development Services are working with all key stakeholders across our towns and have commissioned two key pieces of work to set the direction of the Council's work around town centres going forward. These will inform and align with existing and emerging funding opportunities around town centres.
- ◆ Town Centre Visioning – this will set out how the Council delivers on the strategic aims and objectives at a local level. As noted above, while all towns have similar challenges, the solutions are not always the same. This work will set out how the Council, communities and partners should deliver meaningful and sustainable change within our town centres through a series of projects and action plans.
 - ◆ Transition to Net Zero – town centres are major contributors to pollution and although a number of early wins have been achieved, the ways to deliver long term meaningful and sustainable reductions are complex and not always palatable to business or customers. This work will set out a practical approach to working towards net zero across our towns.

4. Town Centre Activity

4.1. Hamilton

As noted above, Hamilton has seen a change in customer behavior over the past twenty years which has resulted in an increase in vacant retail space.

- 4.1.2. Hamilton, however, is a town centre with strong assets and identity. This is evident through its civic presence, business base, historical architecture and investment to date. These provide the foundations for Hamilton to reassert its role as a strong and vibrant town centre. Recognition of the change in retail allows focus on other key aspects of the town centre including leisure and cultural offering, services and town centre living. As one of Lanarkshire's largest towns, Hamilton is well placed to provide a variety of functions to a large catchment area.
- 4.1.3. Due to a number of commercial factors, such as a shift in retail provision and loss of key town centre anchors (such as Marks and Spencer), the opportunity has arisen to review a number of prominent town centre sites as a whole with the view to creating a masterplan which will meet the needs of today's and tomorrow's customer. The masterplan will bring underutilised areas of the town centre back into use.
- 4.1.4. Enterprise and Sustainability Services has appointed 360 Architecture to undertake a masterplanning exercise involving key sites within the south-eastern quarter of the town centre. This exercise will set the context for public and private sector investment over the next 10+ years. The masterplan will reflect aspirations for a resilient mixed-use economy which repositions the town centre to meet the needs of 21st century living in a high quality and sustainable manner. Sites identified include:-

- ◆ Keith Street Car Park

- ◆ Townhead Street Car Park
- ◆ Regent Shopping Centre
- ◆ New Cross Shopping Centre
- ◆ Duke Street Car Park
- ◆ Former Bairds Department Store
- ◆ Hamilton Police HQ

Masterplan work may also identify further sites.

- 4.1.5. A key component of the masterplan exercise is analysis of market potential to understand developer and investor interests. Following this a land-use strategy will explore options for a mixed-use development which will include residential (linking to the Strategic Housing Investment Plan), leisure, retail, public realm, the green network and parking. A development prospectus will be produced to enable SLC and partners to share the vision for Hamilton town centre with potential partners and investors.
- 4.1.6. The development of the masterplan is a unique chance to deliver transformational change to the town centre. The plan will reduce the centre's reliance on retail and instead focus on the needs and wants of the users of today and the future. The masterplan is due for completion at the end of autumn with consultation taking place early in the new year.
- 4.2. The Hamilton Town Centre Strategy and Action plan is due to be renewed in 2023. Although the strategy covers several areas not covered by the masterplan, masterplan work is a key component with the outcomes shaping the direction of the Strategy over the next 10+ years. As noted at the Community and Enterprise Resources Committee meeting of 29th September, it is deemed prudent to delay publication of a revised Strategy until such time as it can be updated with key elements of the masterplan. It is intended that both the updated Strategy and masterplan outcomes will be brought to committee early next year.
- 4.3. Hamilton Business Improvement District held a successful South Lanarkshire Pride event at the end of July. The event was the first of its kind in Lanarkshire and was attended by circa 6,000 people. Town centre footfall was up 65% over the weekend.
- 4.4. Larkhall
 - 4.4.1. A Place Based Investment Programme (PBIP) award of £100,000 provided a new boiler, hanging baskets and greening and benches at the Growers Office on King Street. These works are due for completion at the end of September 2023.
 - 4.4.2. A second PBIP award of £450,000 has been granted to support creation of 18 affordable homes on the Coal yard site at the junction of Caledonian Road and Raploch Street.
 - 4.4.3. The Larkhall Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan is currently under review and will be updated in due course.
- 4.5. Blantyre
 - 4.5.1. Officers continue to support the actions of the Blantyre Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan.

5. Employee Implications

- 5.1. There are no employee implications from the information set out in this report.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. There are no financial implications from the information set out in this report. All projects and spend referred to will be subject to separate approvals as appropriate.

7. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 7.1. Climate change and working to net zero is at the heart of all the work on town centres as we seek to deliver sustainable town centres which support liveable neighbourhoods. Both the Rutherglen and Cambuslang town centre action plans will have a focus on sustainability.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1. All town centres face a challenging set of circumstances. It is essential the Council plays a full and active role in the future of our town centres. Not doing so will result in continued decline and greater demands on limited resources.

9. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 9.1. Our town centres have to be available for all across our communities. We continue to work and consult with a broad range of groups across our communities and as noted above the work involved in improving our town centres will be subject to wide consultation.

David Booth

Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

4 September 2023

Link(s) to Council Values/Priorities/Outcomes

Values

- ◆ Ambitious, self-aware and improving
- ◆ Fair, open and sustainable

Priorities

- ◆ We will work towards a sustainable future in sustainable places
- ◆ We will work to recover, progress and improve

Outcomes

- ◆ Good quality, suitable and sustainable places to live
- ◆ Thriving business, fair jobs and vibrant town centres

Previous References

- ◆ None

List of Background Papers

- ◆ None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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